

Ranking Member Honda Opening Statement

Legislative Branch Subcommittee Markup

July 13th, 2011

"As I did in Subcommittee, I would like to begin by thanking Chairman Crenshaw, the Appropriations majority staff, and his staff for the professionalism shown during this process. While it is not the bill I would have written, it is the process that I would have followed. Today I hope to make one small improvement through an amendment that will improve the contracting practices of the House.

"As for the underlying bill, the Legislative Branch minus the Senate is being cut by 6.4 % from FY 2011 and 9% from FY 2010. These cuts are being done while we had to fix a \$13 million hole for the Capitol Police because of their accounting mistake in fiscal year 2010. I believe these cuts are harmful to our ability to serve our constituents and House's responsibility to provide effective oversight.

"I know the Chairman was under pressure from the allocation to ensure that our subcommittee shares in the pain when the majority is also cutting Women and Children's nutrition programs, consumer protection, and other important programs in other bills. This bill has succeeded in joining the other flawed bills by cutting at the expense of jobs, strong oversight, and common-sense efficiencies. Maybe with this bill, the smallest of all 12 and the one that funds our own operations, the majority will see the real life impacts of these cuts, one of which is not real deficit reduction.

"This bill would cut the Library of Congress by 8.5%, including a reduction of over 300 employees, including 50 from our much relied upon Congressional Research Service. Members should ask their staff how often they use CRS staff for research, particularly in responding to questions and concerns from their constituents.

"This bill would cut the Government Printing Office by 16%, an agency already planning to let go of 330 employees. There is language encouraging the privatization of GPO's activities. I would like to see the costs associated with asking a private company to operate on a 24 hour cycle when we work into the early morning hours conducting legislative business. Something tells me we would spend more not less.

"The Government Accountability Office, or GAO, is cut by 6.4%. Every dollar spent at GAO results in 4 dollars in taxpayer savings. Is it the majority's priority to not save taxpayers money? Those who claim to want increased oversight of government programs should reject cuts to GAO. They are known as Congress' watchdog, and that watchdog should have teeth.

"We have heard that some Members offices are furloughing staff to meet the 5% cut to the Members' Representational Allowance (MRA) in 2011. Now this bill will further cut MRA's by 6.4%, or \$39 million. Cuts to the MRA means cuts to Members' day-to-day abilities to effectively represent our constituents. From the staff assistant answering calls from our constituents to the caseworker helping grandma recover her lost social security check—all of these services are funded through the MRA. The reduction to MRA will mean a cut of \$88,000 on average per Member office. That is 2 to 3 staffers per office.

"The cut and grow mantra does not work in the economy as a whole; it certainly will not work in the corridors of Congress. I hope this Committee will back agencies up when they will have to deny or severely limit services provided to Members offices because there are fewer people to handle requests. I am sure each subcommittee that has a marked up a bill before this Committee has touted the oversight included in that measure. Many of them utilize GAO's services to achieve that oversight. What will happen to that oversight after our own staffs are cut as well as CRS and GAO?

"Beyond that, we are told to increase security in our district offices. But how are we supposed to pay for it?

"I have a great deal of respect for Chairman Crenshaw. There are not many things he could have done differently with the allocation he had to work under.

"However, I believe we know we will be back here as soon as possible seeking relief for cuts

that are unsustainable. Constituents deserve access to their government and this is not the time to cut our staff.

"I cannot speak enough of the process used by Chairman Crenshaw to complete this bill. We disagree on funding levels which is a legitimate difference. I appreciate that he did not include controversial items that would poison this bill and our working relationship and for that I thank him."